

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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APPROVED BY NEA/P:GFSHERMAN

S/PRS - MR. FUNSETH (INFO)

H - MR. FLATEN (INFO)

EUR/P - MR. JERABEK

IO/P - MR. BLACHLY

SSM - MS. GREEN

NEA/ARP - MR. DICKMAN

AF/P - MR. POPE

NEA - MS. GRIFFIN

----- 021212

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USUN NY

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USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
USMISSION SINAI
CINCEUR

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GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL, CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS
FROM DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PRESS BRIEFING FOR APRIL 9,
1976:

Q. THE MIDDLE EAST NEWS AGENCY REPORTS THAT SYRIAN FORCES
HAVE MOUNTED A BLOCKADE OVER ALL LEBANESE PORTS AND
OTHER ROUTES OF ACCESS. DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THAT?

A. I THINK I AM IN THE SAME POSITION THAT WE HAVE BEEN IN
RECENT DAYS. WE HAVE NO CONFIRMED EVIDENCE OF THIS SORT
OF ACTIVITY. OBVIOUSLY WE ARE WATCHING THE SITUATION
CAREFULLY, AND WE ARE IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH ALL OF THE
PARTIES INVOLVED IN THIS.

Q. IN OTHER WORDS, WORD HAS GONE OUT TO AMERICAN SHIPS
NOT TO ENTER SYRIAN WATERS -- I MEAN LEBANESE WATERS?

A. I AM NOT AWARE THAT ANY WORD HAS GONE OUT, TO AMERICAN
SHIPS TO NOT ENTER LEBANESE WATERS.

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Q. I'M PUZZLED BY THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE NO CONFIRMED
EVIDENCE OF SOMETHING, IF IT WOULD EXIST, THAT WOULD BE
APPARENT TO ANY SHIPPING IN THE AREA. ARE WE TO ASSUME
FROM THE FACT THAT YOU DON'T HAVE ANY CONFIRMED
EVIDENCE THAT IT'S NOT HAPPENING?

A. I DON'T THINK YOU CAN ASSUME THAT, NO. I AM SIMPLY

SAYING THAT FROM WHERE I STAND I CANNOT CONFIRM FOR YOU REPORTS THAT YOU HAVE, AND THAT WE HAVE OBVIOUSLY SEEN, THAT THESE EVENTS ARE TAKING PLACE.

Q. AS A RULE WHEN THERE IS A BLOCKADE IT DOESN'T HAPPEN IN SECRET; IT IS ALSO ANNOUNCED BY THE NATION THAT'S MOUNTING IT OR PURPORTING TO MOUNT IT. HAS THERE BEEN ANY COMMUNICATION FROM SYRIA?

A. WHAT IS ANNOUNCED?

Q. A BLOCKADE. I MEAN, YOU DON'T JUST THROW MINES AROUND.

A. I HAVEN'T SEEN ANY ANNOUNCEMENT.

Q. HAS THERE BEEN AN ANNOUNCEMENT?

A. NOT THAT I KNOW OF, NO.

Q. HAVE YOU HAD ANY COMMUNICATION ON THE QUESTION?

A. BETWEEN WHOM?

Q. BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SYRIA.

A. I SAID WE ARE IN TOUCH WITH ALL PARTIES INVOLVED, AS OBVIOUSLY IS ALWAYS THE CASE, AND I AM NOT ABLE TO GO BEYOND THAT IN DISCUSSING THE CONTENTS OF OUR EXCHANGE.

Q. THROUGHOUT THESE REPORTS YOU'VE SAID YOU HAVE GOT NO CONFIRMED EVIDENCE OF VARIOUS ACTIVITIES ASCRIBED UNCLASSIFIED

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TO THE SYRIANS. DO YOU HAVE ANY EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY? DO YOU HAVE ANY EVIDENCE THAT THESE REPORTS ARE NOT TRUE, THAT THE SYRIANS ARE NOT TAKING THE ACTIVITIES THAT ARE ASCRIBED TO THEM?

A. I DO NOT KNOW THAT WE HAVE ANY EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY. I AM SAYING WE DO NOT HAVE ANY CONFIRMED EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE REPORTS.

Q. IF YOU'RE IN TOUCH WITH THE SYRIANS, YOU SHOULD KNOW YES OR NO.

A. YOU ARE ASKING ME TO TELL YOU WHAT WE HAVE TALKED ABOUT WITH THE SYRIANS, AND I JUST CANNOT DO THAT.

Q. I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT WE ARE NOT PLAYING WORD GAMES HERE WITH THIS WORD "CONFIRMED." ARE WE STILL ALSO TO CONCLUDE THAT YOU HAVE NO EVIDENCE ONE WAY OR ANOTHER THAT SUCH --

A. I WOULD JUST LIKE TO STAY WITH THE FORMULATION I HAVE USED AND WHICH WE HAVE BEEN USING FOR SOME TIME.

Q. WHAT IS THE AMERICAN ATTITUDE TOWARD A BLOCKADE BY SYRIA OF LEBANESE PORTS?

A. I THINK THE AMERICAN ATTITUDE IS, AGAIN, WHAT WE HAVE SAID BEFORE: THAT WE ARE OPPOSED TO ANY OUTSIDE INTERVENTION IN THE LEBANESE SITUATION FROM ANY SOURCE.

Q. THIS WOULD FALL WITHIN THAT?

A. I THINK IT WOULD.

Q. IN FACT, WOULDN'T IT, HOWEVER, ACT TO PREVENT OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE? IN OTHER WORDS, PREVENT OUTSIDE SUPPLIES OF ARMAMENTS TO ONE OF THE COMBATTANT PARTIES?

A. THE ALLEGED BLOCKADE THAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT?

Q. YES.
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A. I AM NOT PREPARED TO JUDGE IT. I REALLY DO NOT WANT TO GIVE YOU A JUDGMENT ON WHETHER THAT WOULD OR WOULD NOT CONTRIBUTE TO A LESSENING OF THE TENSION. I AM SIMPLY SAYING WE ARE OPPOSED TO INTERVENTION BY ANY OUTSIDE SOURCE.

Q. HAS THE UNITED STATES BEEN CAUTIONED AGAINST COMING WITHIN A PARTICULAR DISTANCE OF THE LEBANESE COAST OR ITS PORTS?

A. I CAN'T ANSWER THAT BEYOND TO REPEAT THAT WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ALL INTERESTED PARTIES.

Q. THAT SEEMS TO CHANGE WHAT YOU WERE SAYING TO JIM. YOU RAISED THE POSSIBILITY THAT WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED BUT YOU CAN'T TALK ABOUT IT. IS THAT WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO SAY, YOU CAN'T TALK ABOUT THE SITUATION, OR ARE YOU SAYING YOU ARE NOT AWARE OF OUR BEING INFORMED OF ANY WARNING.

A. I WOULDN'T WANT TO GIVE YOU THE IMPRESSION THAT

THERE WAS ANYTHING TO WHAT YOU ARE SUGGESTING. I AM SIMPLY SAYING THAT WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ALL OF THE PARTIES. I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD READ ANYTHING INTO THE ADMITTEDLY PECULIAR FORMULATIONS THAT SOMETIMES WE USE.

Q. CAN YOU TAKE THE QUESTION THERE ABOUT WHETHER WE'VE BEEN CAUTIONED ABOUT NOT COMING WITHIN A PARTICULAR DISTANCE AND SEE IF YOU CAN GET US AN ANSWER?

A. BE HAPPY TO.

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